Stages and the Alabama Alternate Assessment [AAA] Process

OVERVIEW

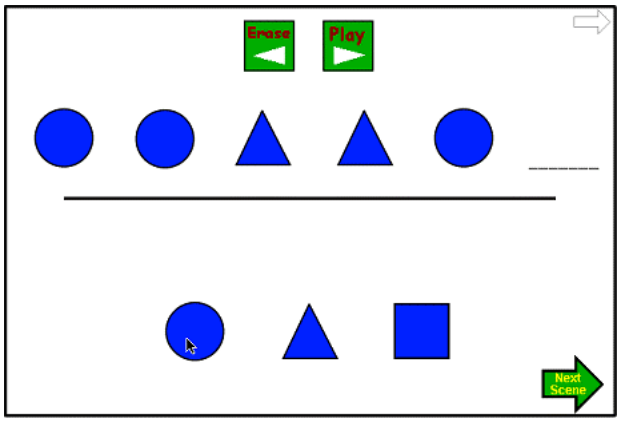
Stages includes two major software components: (a) informal assessment software and (b) curriculum software. Stages informal assessment software is instructional in nature, providing activities with constructive feedback and opportunities for the learner to explore and choose. Stages curriculum software is a collection of interactive daily instructional programs appropriate for learners at each Stage.

Stages software enhances the Alabama alternate assessment process because:

1. **Stages aligns with the Alabama Course of Study.**
2. **Stages documents the assessment procedures used to evaluate learner progress.**
3. **Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.**
4. **Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

1. Stages aligns with the Alabama Course of Study.
Stages ensures meaningful and effective access to Alabama's Course of Study in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Instructors can use Stage activities to evaluate learners with disabilities between formal assessments to determine whether alternate assessment is appropriate, or to create a benchmark of the learner's progress within an alternate curriculum. Please refer to the section, "How Stages Correlates with the Alabama Course of Study" for detailed matching.

2. Stages documents the assessment procedures used to evaluate learner progress.
During Stages software activities, the instructor can print directly from any screen to capture a student-created product. At the end of each activity, a report with instructional data about the time spent, choices made, response accuracy or work product, input method, prompt type/frequency, and time/date stamp are displayed with the learner's name. The instructional team member may wish to then print that screen or save the information as a text-format electronic file.



Example screen shot from Stage Four: Create Patterns

Observation guidelines and forms in the Stages kits help the instructional team make the most out of an activity session. The data-gathering features of the software enable the observer to focus on noting the learner's behavior and thinking-out-loud responses. Two adults from the instructional team can work together: one adult can encourage the learner and the other can note valuable data about behaviors without being noticed by the learner. Alternatively if a video or still camera is available, it may be directed at the learner and the computer monitor to discreetly record interactions and other behaviors while one adult coaches. During the sessions, the learner will be less conscious of her performance being recorded, making her responses more candid. Over time, the collected data will provide evidence that the instructional team needs to build a complete picture of the learner's skill achievement.

3. Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.

The feedback in Stages activities is encouraging and rewarding, providing a relaxed setting for exploring topics and demonstrating skills with minimal supervision. Many Stages activities include accessible choice-making opportunities. Functional skills activities include various community settings.

4. Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.

An objective of Stages software is to provide several options for input methods and other settings so that the learner's instructor, parents, and others in the IEP team can determine his ideal learning and communication environment. Different devices, auditory feedback, speeds and prompts are among the variables that help the instructor create an environment that corresponds with the motor skills of the learner.

SUMMARY

Stages augments the Alabama alternative assessment cycle. Together, the Stages set of activities and recommended curriculum practice software provide a comprehensive benchmark tool. Stages activities are designed to assist the instructional/IEP team in documenting learner access to the general curriculum, determine assessment strategy, and discover the learner's abilities and thinking approach.

How Stages Correlates with the Alabama Course of Study[1]

English Language Arts

Content Standards

1. Use a wide range of strategies to interpret, evaluate, appreciate, and construct meaning from print materials.

- Using knowledge of letter-sound correspondence.
- Using knowledge of word meaning.
- Applying knowledge of sentence structure and context.
- Locating information in reference sources.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: *Reading Readiness:* Letter ID, Letter Sounds
Stage Five: *Reading:* Letters (Alphabetization 1 and 2), Meaning
Stage Seven: *Making Sentences:* Building Sentences, Writing Sentences

- Stage Four *Letter* activities include simple animations to keep the learner engaged. The learner first explores upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet and their sounds. The learner is then asked to identify the same letters and sounds.
- Stage Five *Letters* asks the learner to alphabetize word lists by first letter (Alpha 1) and by second and third letter (Alpha 2). This skill is important for using reference materials. *Meaning* includes Dolch words at five levels: Pre-primer, Primer, and Grades One, Two and Three. The learner is asked to identify the illustration that shows the meaning of the given word.
- In Stage Seven, the learner can demonstrate the ability to form sentences without the need for typing skills. Word walls are provided in *Building Sentences. Writing Sentences* is a non-structured sentence practice activity.

3. Demonstrate literal understanding of print material.

- Following directions.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Activities in every Stage provide the learner with opportunities to attend to spoken, written, or multisensory instructions. The observation forms at each Stage help the instructor record the learner's behavioral response to instructions.

Stage One: *All Activities*
Stage Three: *All Activities*
Stage Six: *All 'Explore' Activities*

- Stage One includes short animations to determine the learner's ability to attend to an activity and use an appropriate input device. The activities present a visual, auditory, or multisensory prompt that encourages the learner to continue activating the device.
- Stage Three gives the learner an opportunity to independently choose desired activities and responses to questions.
- Stage Six *Explore* activities give the learner an opportunity to use an input device to select items on the screen to hear and/or read information about it.

[1] Information from the Alabama Course of Study. ftp://ftp.alsde.edu/documents/54/ELA03.rtf and ftp://ftp.alsde.edu/documents/54/Ma-03.rtf Accessed September 3, 2002.

4. Exhibit the habit of reading for a substantial amount of time daily, including assigned and self-selected materials at their independent and instructional levels.

8. Read grade-level texts aloud and silently with fluency and comprehension.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Six: *Stories:* Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan

- Stage Six *Stories* are self-paced activities with short passages about real people performing activities of daily living. The learner can follow text on the screen as it is spoken (Multisensory) or read silently (Visual).

19. Demonstrate vocabulary growth developed through reading and listening to literature.
- Expanding vocabulary in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Two: *Nouns, Verbs, Attributes*
Stage Five: *Reading:* Meaning, Context
Stage Seven: *Making Words:* High Frequency Words

- Stage Two exposes the learner to language using illustrated short rhyming passages about familiar nouns such as animals and foods.
- Stage Five *Context* assesses the learner's ability to select the appropriate high-frequency word to fill in a blank spot in a sentence.
- *Meaning* is a collection of activities at 5 levels of difficulty. The learner is asked to read a word on the screen and identify the picture in a scene that illustrates the meaning of the word.
- The *High Frequency Words* activity presents a photo album with captions missing words from the following list: *the*, *of, and*, *a*, *to*, *in*, *is*, *you*, *that*, and *it*..

- Improving sentence and paragraph structure in writing.
- Improving spelling and mechanics in writing.
- Improving grammar and usage in speaking and writing.

21. Know and apply principles of grammar and usage in writing, speaking, and presenting and apply mechanics in writing.
- Capitalization.
- Punctuation.
- Grammar and usage.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Seven: *Making Sentences:* Spelling and Grammar

- *Spelling and Grammar* is a collection of different activities including: Spelling, Homonyms, Capitalization, Noun-Verb Agreement, Pronoun Use, Word Order, and a Custom option. Using the Custom option, the instructor can create a custom list that includes proofreading or the learner's most familiar words..

23. Exhibit the habit of writing daily in academic, social, and/or personal situations.
31. Use computers for expression.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Seven: *Making Sentences:* Building Sentences, Writing Sentences
Making Stories

- The *Sentences* activities provide the learner with the opportunity to demonstrate sentence-writing skills using an appropriate input device. Text-to-speech capability in all Stage Seven activities gives the learner added feedback.

Mathematics
Content Standards

NUMBER SENSE, NUMBER SYSTEMS, NUMBER THEORY

1. Demonstrate proficiency in the use of basic number concepts and skills.
- Comparing numbers and sets from 0 to 1000.
- Reading [and writing number] words [from 0 to 1000].

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Number ID, Counting
Stage Five: *Problem Solving:* Number Guess

- Stage Four *Number ID* asks the learner to select the correct number from 0 to 10 given the number word in text and/or spoken word. The activities are presented in the context of a telephone and an elevator. The learner counts on-screen objects in *Counting.* Simple animations reward the learner for a correct answer.
- Stage Five *Number Guess* gives the learner an opportunity to compare numbers and deduce a mystery number. The computer generates feedback indicating whether the learner's guess is high or low.

5. Demonstrate proficiency in adding and subtracting two-digit numbers with and without regrouping.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Math:* Math Facts (+, -)

- *Math Facts* presents the learner with a number line to use with an input device in order to enter the solution to the given problems. One- and two-digit numbers are used, with and without regrouping.

7. Develop vocabulary associated with operations.
13. Determine which operations are needed to solve problems.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Math:* Word Problems (+, -, x, ÷)

- The *Word Problems* activity gives the learner an opportunity to explore the concept of solving word problems by listening and watching as examples are shown. The learner then applies the knowledge by solving word problems.

8. Demonstrate an understanding of multiplication.
- Representing multiplication using physical materials.
- Recognizing multiplication as repeated addition.
- Applying multiplication to problem situations.

9. Demonstrate oral and written proficiency in using basic multiplication facts through 9 x 9.

10. Multiply whole numbers with and without regrouping using single-digit multipliers.

11. Develop an understanding of division.
- Representing multiplication using physical materials.
- Recognizing multiplication as repeated addition.
- Applying multiplication to problem situations.

12. Divide using one-digit divisors.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Math:* Math Facts (x, ÷), Word Problems (x, ÷)

- In the *Word Problems* activity, the learner can demonstrate multiplication and division skills with and without the aid of onscreen illustrations.

15. Solve non-routine problems using a variety of strategies.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Math:* Charts and Graphs

- *Charts and Graphs* gives the learner an opportunity to apply knowledge of common graphic features to locate facts in order to answer questions.

16. Demonstrate proficiency in identifying a fraction model.
- Parts of a whole figure.
- Parts of a group of objects.

17. Model equivalent fractions with concrete objects.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Math:* Fraction ID, Fraction Application

- Stage Five *Fraction ID* asks the learner to select the fraction that illustrates the ratio of selected pictures on the screen in relation to the total number of objects on the screen. The multiple choice questions ask the learner to distinguish fractions with like and unlike denominators. *Fraction Application* asks the learner to identify the correct number of sections of a whole object to represent a fraction or a fractional solution to a word problem.

21. Use the decimal point in money values.

47. Use coins and bills. (*from GEOMETRY, SPATIAL SENSE, MEASUREMENT*)
- Counting and trading.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Six: *Assess:* Counting Money, Money Equivalents

- Stage Six *Money* activities relate money amounts to situations of daily living. Coins up to $0.25 and bills up to $20 are included.

GEOMETRY, SPATIAL SENSE, MEASUREMENT

29. Identify geometric figures.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Four: *Explore and Assess:* Shape ID
Stage Five: *Problem Solving:* Mystery Shape

- St age Four *Shape ID* gives the learner an opportunity to identify two-dimensional shapes in drawings or photographs in scenes and isolation.
- In Stage Five *Mystery Shape* the learner compares the attributes of two-dimensional shapes in order to deduce the correct choice.

34. Determine the perimeter of polygons.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Math:* Geometry

- Stage Five *Geometry* asks the learner questions about perimeter, area, and volume with the help of on-screen diagrams showing non-conventional units such as footsteps, tiles, and cubes.

36. Determine coordinate locations on a grid.

53. Analyze information collected from real-life situations. (*from PROBABILITY, STATISTICS, DISCRETE MATHEMATICS)*

- Describing data

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Math:* Charts and Graphs

- The Stage Five *Charts and Graphs* activity includes bar graphs, line graphs, and pie charts. Familiar topics such as favorite snacks and animals help make the activities engaging for the learner.

44. Demonstrate proficiency in using analog and digital clocks to identify time to the minute.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Six: *Assess:* Telling Time

- In Stage Six *Telling Time*, correct responses and distracter targets are coordinated to help the instructor determine patterns in incorrect learner responses. Both analog and digital clocks are included in this activity. Realistic scenarios help the learner connect daily activities with the concept of time.

PATTERNS, FUNCTIONS, ALGEBRA

49. Describe, extend, and create a variety of geometric patterns.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Explore Patterns, Continue/Fill-In Patterns, Create Patterns

- Stage Four gives the learner an opportunity to first observe simple repeating sequences of geometric shapes, sound, and color in *Explore Patterns*. The learner is asked to complete sequences of shapes by choosing the correct shape in *Continue/Fill-In Patterns*. Finally, *Create Patterns* gives the learner a chance to compose sequences based on shape, color and sound.